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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002752

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: VP HASHIMI OFFERS ONE MORE NINEWA INITIATIVE

REF: BAGHDAD 2731

Classified By: A/DCM Gary A. Grappo for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: A key advisor to Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi said the VP intends to pursue a reconciliation initiative in Ninewa before the upcoming election, and to then focus on Kirkuk. In Ninewa, he plans to focus not just on brokering a power-sharing agreement between feuding Sunni Arabs and Kurds, but on the full spectrum of issues, including security and disputed internal boundaries (DIBs). While Hashimi has said he will coordinate his initiative with DPM Rafi al-Issawi, who has undertaken mediation efforts in Ninewa at PM Maliki's behest, he has not done so to date. His newly expressed interest in Ninewa and Kirkuk seem to be driven mostly by the desire to score political points in an election season. Hashimi has been careful to manage public perception of his reported links to Ba'athists and extremists; he seems poised to embark on a public mediation effort that could lay bare his ties to those elements, a potentially risky move. Given his history of unhelpful late-innings initiatives, it seems unlikely that Hashimi's involvement in contentious northern Iraq issues will be helpful or fruitful. End summary.

SEPARATE HASHIMI INITIATIVE FOR NINEWA

[¶2.](#) (C) Krikor Derhagopian, Senior Advisor to Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, told Poloffs in a meeting on October 12 that the VP had directed him to develop a plan for mediation between Arab and Kurdish factions in Ninewa Province. Hashimi's mediation would be separate from Deputy Prime Minister Rafi al-Issawi's effort to broker a power-sharing agreement between the (Kurdish) Ninewa Fraternal League and (Sunni Arab) al-Hadba Gathering and mediate related tensions in Ninewa. Derhagopian has put forward a recommended action plan to Hashimi, who is expected to approve it this week.

A MAN OF THE PEOPLE

[¶3.](#) (C) Hashimi plans to visit Ninewa before the January national elections. In addition to meeting with key political actors like Ninewa Governor Atheel al-Nujaifi, the KDP's Khesro Goran and Sheikh Abdallah al-Yawar (al-Shammari), an original architect of the al-Hadba Gathering and acting paramount sheikh of the influential al-Shammari tribal confederation, Hashimi will seek to foster reconciliation "at the grass-roots level". He plans to meet with lesser sheikhs, church groups and civil society groups in small focus group-like meetings. Derhagopian said Hashimi believed DPM Issawi had focused too much attention on Ninewa's political class, and that Hashimi believed he could leverage his close ties with Turkomans, Christian minority leaders, Shammari tribal leaders and KRG President Masoud Barzani to help advance Ninewa reconciliation.

HASHIMI TO FOCUS ON DIBS, SECURITY

[¶4.](#) (C) According to Derhagopian, Hashimi intends to focus not just on brokering a Provincial Council power-sharing agreement, but on the full spectrum of Ninewa issues,

including security. He specifically mentioned that Hashimi intended to discuss the presence of Kurdish Peshmerga and Assayesh below the Green Line in Ninewa Province and Disputed Internal Boundary (DIBs) areas of the province, including Sinjar. Derhagopian claimed Hashimi would coordinate his effort with DPM al-Issawi's office to avoid complicating Issawi's effort; however, he has not done so to date. (Note: Per reftel and previous, al-Issawi was instructed by PM Maliki to broker a power-sharing agreement in Ninewa and mitigate heightened tensions there. End note.)

KIRKUK FIRST

¶5. (C) Hashimi's prospective Ninewa effort is part of a Q5. (C) Hashimi's prospective Ninewa effort is part of a broader package of proposed engagement on DIBs issues. According to Derhagopian, Hashimi believes that resolving Kirkuk first would alleviate pressure on Ninewa, Diyala and other DIBs areas enough to facilitate solutions in those areas. The concept is to pursue short-term mediation in Ninewa to maintain stability there, and to embark on aggressive mediation in Kirkuk after national elections in January. Derhagopian said Hashimi communicated regularly with KRG President Barzani, and implied that Barzani had blessed Hashimi's plan to pursue Kirkuk reconciliation efforts.

¶6. (C) Hashimi's plan for Kirkuk argues for: 1) focusing on Kirkuk first to facilitate a solution in other DIBs areas; 2) reaching a negotiated political solution, with significant international mediation, on Kirkuk's final status and power-sharing at the provincial government level (Hashimi supports special status, with Kirkuk answering neither to Baghdad nor Erbil), and; 3) subsequent to a negotiated agreement, conducting an accurate assessment of the current Kirkuk population (either extrapolating from the 1957 census

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or conducting a new census). Hashimi believes Kirkuk should be included in the upcoming national election.

¶7. (C) Comment: Hashimi's contemplated foray into the DIBs area, as presented by Derhagopian, glosses over a host of complex details, but the VP has a history of half-baked late-innings interventions (e.g., the Strategic Framework Agreement). Given the KRG's historical support for Hashimi (both Talabani and Barzani strongly backed Hashimi's candidacy for the vice-presidency), he could end up as a stalking horse for Barzani's Kirkuk agenda. It is interesting that Hashimi, who has carefully managed public perception of his links to Ba'athists and extremists, seems poised to embark on a public mediation effort in Ninewa that could lay bare his ties to Sheikh Abdallah, the al-Nujaifis and other actors with reported ties to Ba'athists and Syria.

Derhagopian's brief suggested that much of the impetus for Hashimi's putative intervention is driven by a desire to score political points in an election season. Hashimi is also in coalition discussions with Issawi; an alternative interpretation is that he hopes to pressure Issawi into joining his coalition by threatening to play in a bailiwick (Ninewa) that has to date been Issawi's exclusive purview at the national level. End comment.

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